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CROATIAN JOKES ABOUT BOSNIANS*

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Jokes about stupidity are the most common, most widespread and most long-lasting kind of jokes apart from sexual jokes (Davies 1998). They delineate the otherwise ambiguous boundaries of joke-tellers' society and pin the stupidity or some other undesirable human quality on a particular ethnic group (Davies 1990). The geographical, social, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics of the target groups of such jokes can be clearly established (cf. Davies 1982; 1990; 1998). They are ambiguous, not entirely "strange" nor entirely "ours". This was indicated by H. Bergson and S. Freud 100 years ago, and elaborated in the works of Ch. Davies.

In the paper it is shown that Bosnians and especially Bosniaks, i.e. Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina, are the ideal candidates for Croatian jokes about stupidity – they occupy the periphery of the Croatian ethnic territory, speak the same language with some distinctive traits, their religion is different, often they migrate to Croatian cities and have manual or blue-collar jobs.

Keywords: joke, joke-teller, target, butt of the joke, stupidity, Croats, Bosnians, Bosniaks, Muslims

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I. In Croatian jokes about stupidity, Bosnians are a frequent target. We establish this as a fact well known to the partakers of Croatian culture. Hence, first of all, several examples, put together randomly, mostly based on our own recollection from the 1980s until the present day. Exemplars preserved in our mind, such as they are, regardless of whether they are felicitous or not:

(1) Što Bosanac radi kad završi Ekonomski fakultet? – Prebaci skelu na Medicinski.
[What does the Bosnian do after he's finished the School of Economics? – He moves the scaffolding to the Medical School.]

(2) Mujo, jesi čuo da dolazi Bečka filharmonija? – Ma zabit će im Željo bar tri komada.

[Mujo, have you heard that Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is coming? – So what, Željo [Željezničar FC] will score at least three goals against them.]

(3) Zašto Mujo na noćnom ormariću ima punu i praznu čašu? – Nije siguran hoće li po noći biti žedan ili neće.

[Why does Mujo keep a full and an empty glass on his night table? – He's not sure whether he'll be thirsty during the night or not.]

(4) Mujo i Haso u grupnjaku sa svojim suprugama. Nakon nekog vremena Mujo reče: – Ljudi, dajte da se organiziramo, već treći put pušim.

[Mujo and Haso having a foursome with their wives. After a while Mujo says: – People, let's get organized, I'm sucking for the third time in a row.]

(5) Vozi Mujo po autobanu i sluša radio. Spiker poziva na oprez jer da jedan luđak na autobanu vozi u krivom smjeru. Misli si Mujo: – Da jedan!? Stotine!

[Mujo drives along the Autobahn and listens to the radio. The announcer calls for caution because there is a lunatic on the Autobahn driving the wrong way. Mujo ponders: – Just one!? Hundreds of them!]

We could have referred to them as *jokes about Mujo and Haso* (cf. examples [2]–[5]), as they are indeed called colloquially or in internet collections, but we have opted for the more general term *jokes about Bosnians* since it covers the same jokes. When they enter a relation with other peoples, the targets are regularly named Bosnians (but not Bosniaks, see below):

(6) Nakon tri dana ispod ruševina newyorških Blizanaca izlazi Bosanac i otresajući prašinu promrmlja: – Jebo vas vaki aerodrom, da vas jebo! (www.najboljivicevi.com, 26. 8. 2015)

[After three days spent under the ruins of the New York Twins a Bosnian comes out and mumbles shaking off the dust: – What kind of a fucking airport is this!?!]

(7) Pošalju Rusi u svemir Bosanca i tri psa. Nakon izvjesnog vremena nazovu psa broj jedan i kažu: – Provjeri pritisak.

Pas odgovori: – Av-av (razumio)!

Zatim nazovu psa broj dva i kažu: – Provjeri smjer.

Pas odgovori: – Av-av!

Zatim psa broj tri i kažu: – Provjeri navigaciju.

Pas odgovori: Av-av!

Zatim nazovu Bosanca i kažu mu: – Nahrani pse i ne diraj ništa! (www.najbolji-vicevi.com, 14. 3. 2014)

[The Russians send a Bosnian and three dogs into space. After some time, they call dog no. one and say: – Check pressure.

The dog responds: – Woof-woof (understood)!

Then they call dog no. two and say: – Check direction.

The dog responds: – Woof-woof!

Then they call dog no. three and say: – Check navigation.

The dog responds: – Woof-woof!

Finally, they give the Bosnian a call and say: – Feed the dogs and don't touch a thing!]

Let us add in the introduction that we will not dwell on the issue of what a *joke* (G. Witz) actually is, relying on the recipient's common sense and elementary knowledge. The one interested rather in details of the definition of joke, and also of joke structure, jocular text types (concise micro-narrative, dialogue, question-answer structure, riddle), and a possible distinction between joke and wit, witticism (Cr. *vic* and *dosjetka*), can find ample information, for instance, in the following works: Attardo (1994), Attardo & Chabanne (1992), Attardo & Raskin (1991), Davies (1990; 2011), Raskin (1985), Hockett (1973), and, in Croatia, Užarević (1978; 2012), Škreb (1986), Solar (1971; 1995).

II. The very beginning of the 20th century saw the publication of two seminal works on verbal humour – *Laughter* by H. Bergson (*Le rire*, 1900) and *Jokes* by S. Freud (*Witz*, 1905). Small wonder that we, too, should use them for introduction; with Freud, to be sure, we will do so indirectly, through his other writings. Bergson (1900) singles out the following key elements of laughter: humanness, indifference and sociableness, that is, utility for the society. With regard to humanness, he points out that which is relevant to us: the comical, which incites to laughter, is human not only because man is the only animal that laughs, as had been perceived by others before him, but because man laughs precisely at man:

On rira d'un animal, mais parce qu'on aura surpris chez lui une attitude d'homme ou une expression humaine. [...] si quelque autre animal y parvient, ou quelque objet inanimé, c'est par une ressemblance avec l'homme, par la marque que l'homme y imprime ou par l'usage que l'homme en fait. (Bergson 1900 [1959: 10])

[You may laugh at an animal, but only because you have detected in it some human attitude or expression. [...] for if any other animal, or some lifeless object, produces the same effect, it is always because some resemblance to man, of the stamp he gives it or the use he puts it to. (Bergson 1911: 3–4)]

In other words, man laughs at man or at the animal most similar to him, at his imitation, his lesser copy, for instance, a monkey, a dog behaving as a human, a crow quick to think of a way to snatch some treat, and subsequently also at a caricature, at impersonators, distorted versions of himself.

We will briefly return to Freud's *Jokes* below (see § III). Presently, what is more important to us is the term he came across somewhat later while reading *The Mystic Rose*, the study on primitive marriage and taboos related to sexuality written by anthropologist and tennis player A. E. Crawley (1902). In *The Taboo of Virginity* (1918), i.e. part three of *Contributions to the Psychology of Love*, he wrote:

Crawley, in language which differs only slightly from the current terminology of psycho-analysis, declares that each individual is separated from the others by a *taboo of personal isolation*, and that it is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them. It would be tempting to pursue this idea and to derive from this *narcissism of minor differences* [G. *Narzißmus der kleinen Unterschiede*] the hostility which in every human relation we see fighting successfully against feelings of fellowship and overpowering the commandment that all men should love one another. (Freud 1918: 169 [2011: 2355])

Subsequently, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), in elaborating the psychoanalytic insight regarding the ambivalence of feelings between closely related persons (on the ambivalence of feelings, see e.g. Freud 1912–1913) – i.e. every intimate and to some extent long-lasting relation between two persons, possibly with the exception of the mother-son relation, contains a suppressed sediment of aversive, inimical feelings – he observed that it was so in marriage, in friendship, between parents and children, and went on as follows:

Of two neighbouring towns each is the other's most jealous rival; every little canton looks down upon the others with contempt. Closely related races keep one another at arm's length; the South German cannot endure the North German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion upon the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese. [...] In the undisguised antipathies and aversions which people feel towards strangers with whom they have to do we may recognize the expression of self-love – of narcissism. [...] We do not know why such sensitiveness should have been directed to just these details of differentiation. (Freud 1921: 111 [2011: 3794–3795])

The two considerations merged, almost incidentally, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930):

It is clearly not easy for men to give up the satisfaction of this inclination to aggression. They do not feel comfortable without it. The advantage which a comparatively small cultural group offers of allowing this instinct an outlet in the form of hostility against intruders is not to be despised. It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness. I once discussed the phenomenon that it is precisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, who are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other – like the Spaniards and Portuguese, for instance, the North Germans and South Germans, the English and Scotch, and so on. I gave this phenomenon the name of *the narcissism of minor differences* [G. *Narzissmus der kleinen Differenzen*], a name which does not do much to explain it. We can now see that it is a convenient and relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression, by means of which cohesion between the members of the community is made easier. (Freud 1930: 473–474 [2011: 4506])

Finally, as far as we can establish, we find that *minor, small differences* are mentioned in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), when Freud writes about the reasons behind the Europeans' anti-Semitism:

Other grounds for hating the Jews are stronger – thus, the circumstances that they live for the most part as minorities among other peoples, for the communal feeling of groups requires, in order to complete it, hostility towards some extraneous minority, and the numerical weakness of this excluded minority encourages its suppression. There are, however, two other characteristics of the Jews which are quite unforgivable. First is the fact that in some respects they are different from their »host« nations. They are not fundamentally different, for they are not Asiatics of a foreign race, as their enemies maintain, but composed for the most part of remnants of the Mediterranean peoples and heirs of the Mediterranean civilization. But they are none the less different, often in an indefinable way different, especially from the Nordic peoples, and the intolerance of groups is often, strangely enough, exhibited more strongly against small differences [G. *kleine Unterschiede*] than against fundamental ones [G. *fundamentale Differenzen*]. The other point has a still greater effect: namely, that they defy all oppression [...] (Freud 1939: 197 [2011: 4913])

Since Freud's anthropological insights are widely applicable to our theme, let us now summarize them. What we are dealing here with is a particular kind of masses, groups of people, namely national communities. In order to reinforce their feeling of unity and self-love (on primary and secondary *narcissism* as completely natural qualities of a person, see Freud

1914), they harbour inimical feelings towards another group, at least by »ridiculing« it or »casting every kind of aspersion« upon it. The other group – as per the examples enumerated by Freud – is an adjoining one (cf. the English and Scots, North Germans and South Germans, the Spanish and the Portuguese), i.e. spatially close, familiar, present, often less numerous (cf. Jews and the host European nations), very similar to the more numerous one, but also different in some way, it is comprised of the »closest strangers«, it speaks the same, or a similar, or an insignificantly different language, but certainly understandable to the first group, and, finally, the second group can be of a different denomination (cf. Jews).

It is obvious that all the enumerated qualities, together with Bergson's, already point at the essence of our initial statement: in Croatian jokes about stupidity, Bosnians are a frequent target. We can be even more precise now: Specifically, Muslims, Bosniaks, not Bosnia-Herzegovinian Croats or Serbs. For when they are named, they always have distinctively Muslim names such as Mujo (Mustafa), Haso (Hasan), Huso (Husein), Suljo (Sulejman) and Fata (Fatima). Let us state it right away, though it has also already become obvious: laughing at another group is an act by which a group nurtures, establishes and maintains itself, and this act tells us more about the laughing group than about the one laughed at. To put it in jokeological terms – a joke tells us more about the joker (joke-teller) than about the target, the butt of the joke.

III. To go a step further, we return, as announced, to Freud's *Jokes* (1905) and recall that joke is defined there as tendentious (G. *tendenziös*). Joke (G. *Witz*) originates from the children's game (G. *Spiel*), specifically the play with words, but it remains a non-tendentious, innocent (G. *harmlos*) play or a jest (G. *Scherz*) until, in addition to the basic tendency to economize or to saving (G. *ersparende Tendenz*) – which in itself creates pleasure (G. *Lust*), but does not have to be witty, just as every succinctness or laconicism is not necessarily witty – it harnesses other tendencies, of which Freud discerns four – obscenity, aggressiveness, cynicism and scepticism. An exposing, obscene joke serves to reiterate the original desire for exposure. A hostile, aggressive joke reiterates the original aggression towards the other, mocks him, insults him, humiliates him with words. A blasphemous, cynical joke is directed against the discipline of institutions and imposed regulations. A sceptical joke questions the possibility of conceiving concepts and truths in general. Of course, Freud's interpretation is psychoanalytic – and in that sense may not even be correct, which is of secondary importance to our

problem – but it is nonetheless an impeccable catalogue of the most frequent subjects of jokes in all cultures. Let us repeat, the subjects are: sexuality (sexual jokes), mocking the other (jokes about stupidity), institutions (including, for instance, marriage as one of the most ancient limiting institutions, the church, religion, the authorities, as in the political joke), jokes in which every possible truth is twisted. It is, therefore, no wonder that the author of the first veritable linguistic theory of verbal humour, V. Raskin, rounded off his pivotal book on the Semantic Script Theory of Humour with the analysis of the three joke scenarios – sexual joke, ethnic joke (with scenarios such as stupidity, stinginess, deviousness, oversexualization and undersexualization, i.e. refusal or denial of sex) and political joke (see Raskin 1985). After all, our examples (1)–(7) are indeed ethnic jokes about stupidity with an additional sexual script in example (4). All in all, as far as we know, there have always been jokes about stupidity of some outside group, a group that is not ours, which is a bit different than ours – there were such jokes in Ancient Egypt and in Ancient Greece, but in industrialized societies they assumed national proportions (v. Davies 1998). After sexual jokes, they are by far the most frequent jokes of the contemporary world, as already written by, e.g., Apte (1985: 115) or Davies (1998: 28, 63; 2011: 20).

IV.1 In the remainder, we will approach jokes about Bosnians specifically through the several-decade-spanning research endeavour of British sociologist Ch. Davies (1982; 1990; 1998; 2009; 2011). He strived at a sociologically founded and comparative-cultural understanding and description of humour which can be roughly described as *ethnic*, but which in time has been elaborated into a model for understanding every verbal humour about *stupidity* of another group of people on the one hand and *canniness* (Cr. *promućurnost*, *prefriganost*) on the other. So, in the first type, one group of people ascribes or lays on another some undesirable quality or way of conduct. We will not dwell on the second type; it is just worth noting that in such jokes, the opposition to someone stupid is not someone *clever* or *smart* (Cr. *pametna*), but someone who possesses a quite peculiar set of traits which Davies encompasses by the Scottish adjective *canny*. Again, not accidentally Scottish, for Scots and Jews are typical and international targets of such jokes; our local equivalent would be, for instance, people from the island of Brač or from Herzegovina. To be sure, the *canny* is in fact thought of as shrewd and keen-witted, but primarily as calculated, cunning, devious, inexorable, stingy, homely, sparing, moderate, cautious, untrusting,

resourceful. (That is why the less frequent marked regionalisms *promućuran* or *prefrigan* seem to us to be the most appropriate equivalents in translation into Croatian.) In addition, it must be observed that canniness in jokes is also treated like a flaw. To put it simply, jokes are not interested in virtues, or, if the subject of the joke is a virtue such as intelligence, then it is associated with some morally questionable action, with obtaining undeserved gain, i.e., again, with a flaw.

Merely as an illustration, here is another example, Davies' Brazilian joke about the stupidity of the Portuguese, applicable to the current Croatian-Slovenian relations regarding the Cove of Savudrija (Cr. Savudrijska vala) or the Bay of Piran (Cr. Piranski zaljev), which will demonstrate the international, universal character of the stupidity scenario:

At the time of the 1982 war in the South Atlantic between Britain and Argentina the Portuguese foreign minister suggested that the dispute between the two countries should be settled by giving the Falkland Islands to Britain and the Malvinas to Argentina. (Brazilian, 1980s, Davies 1990: 13)

The example should further warn us to avoid unfounded association of jokes about stupidity with latent or acute inter-group conflicts. Groups can love or not love one another, tolerate or not tolerate one another, but the very same jokes about stupidity are told both where there is conflict (e.g. between the English and the Irish, between Croats and Bosniaks) and where there never has been any (for instance, in Canada about Newfies, i.e. Newfoundlanders, and in the United States about Poles, that is, immigrants of Polish origin). Jokes about stupidity are a universal and are to be approached as such.

IV.2 Davies' (1982) starting thesis was that there are two kinds of boundaries important to members of ethnic groups. The first are social and geographic boundaries determining who is a group member, and who is not. The second are moral boundaries determining what is acceptable and typical conduct of a group member, and what is not. Ethnic jokes supervise the boundaries, making fun of the adjoining groups or minority groups within the dominant one. Groups of those others are quite clearly peripheral, marginal – with regard to geography and culture, often with regard to economy and language. By means of ethnic jokes – as one of the ways – the dominant group legitimizes and demarcates itself, draws more sharply the boundaries, on the margins of which various ambiguous groups dwell, ones that are a »somewhat lesser version« of the dominant group, like »an image

in a distorting mirror» (two frequent analogies in Davies, see e.g. Davies 1998). The *centre vs. periphery* dichotomy, initially Davies' fundamental opposition, was later complemented by two additional ones – the *competition vs. monopoly* opposition (2009) and the *mind vs. matter* opposition (2011) (see below § IV.3). Incidentally, in Davies' works there is no mention of the Prototype Theory, but implicitly – as can be seen – all elements are here: the prototype (centre) and the edge or periphery, vague, fuzzy boundaries between categories (ethnic groups), overlap between them and the desire to clarify them.

And why are stupidity and caniness such frequent joke scenarios? – Because they are extremes framing the trajectory of each individual member of the modern industrialized society who, on the one hand, legitimately wants to succeed in his work and earn a living, while, on the other, he wants to buy enjoyment in leisure with the earned money. The tension between work and leisure is the key tension of the industrialized society in peacetime, when it is ruled by a particularly impersonal order – the marketplace. Due to this tension, the one who is unsuccessful in the market due to lack of capability is thought of as stupid, while the one who is successful *only* in the market and is incapable of enjoying life, of thriving also in leisure, is thought of as canny.

Davies (1990) delves into the thought on the requirements of contemporary industrialized society as opposed to the traditional, static ones. In the world of technique, vast accumulated and specialized knowledge, computers and high technology – which only a few truly understand and grasp, while most only make use of it – human stupidity is much more visible and can have fatal consequences. Thus it is no wonder that many contemporary jokes are put precisely in contexts that are highly dependable on the skill and knowledge of individuals, e.g. in airplanes or submarines. Our examples (5)–(7) about driving down the Autobahn or travelling by airplane or spaceship are representative of the clash between tradition and modernity, of the inability to cope with the contemporary technological achievements. Modern society requires, on the one hand, constant mind strain and adaptability to the new, it requires ruthless market competition, and, on the other, enjoyment in the fruits of one's labour and social sensibility. This contradiction begets two kinds of failure, two extremes – stupidity and caniness – and the ethnic joke is the way in which the teller is placed in the moderate middle position, ascribing every deviation from the norm to someone else.

Now we may again pause for a moment and recall that the same thought was developed by Bergson (1900) – every inadaptability is funny (with the

well-known idea of the machine or automaton), and since inadaptability is of no use in life, the comic element is a corrective instrument drawing inadaptability into the open and exposing it to ridicule.

The other that is being laughed at – to hark back to Davies' (1990) insights – is by no means random, it is universally recognisable and determinable. What must immediately catch our eye, and already did in Freud's examples (see above § II), is that the other astonishingly resembles the joke-teller. Most often it is a group with which the joke-tellers share the state, language and culture; one might say – the remotest one of us or the closest stranger, i.e. the remotest provincial or an almost completely assimilated immigrant. With regard to Croats, Bosnians, i.e. Bosniaks, display these qualities perfectly. Let us take a closer look at them. First, the joke target inhabits the literal, physical end of the ethnic space or state, islands such as Newfoundland, Tasmania, Sicily, faraway, remote peninsulas such as southern Italy, Yucatan in Mexico, remote littoral areas such as Ostfriesland in Germany. The joke tellers are usually at the centre, the metropolis, they are culturally, technologically and geographically dominant over the peripheral, provincial targets. Here the words *periphery* and *province* are to be understood literally, but it is no accident that in many languages they have a negative connotation of obsolescence, backwardness, unprogressiveness, just as it is in the jokes. It is similar with the immigrant population, which is often ghettoized. Second, the tellers and the targets usually speak the same or very close language of the same linguistic family, which means that they understand one another, but it is crucial that the tellers consider the target's language some sort of improper or distorted version of their own. This applies to the Spanish and the Portuguese, Southern and Northern Germans, the English and the Irish (Freud's examples, see above § II), to the French and the French-speaking Swiss, the French and the Walloons, the Dutch and the Flemish (Davies' examples). Note that Belgium is a double »periphery« and doubly ambiguous, to both the French and the Dutch, with the expected consequence that jokes about stupid Belgians are told both in France and in the Netherlands. Bosniaks are in the same situation as regards Croats and Serbs. Naturally, the »distorted« language can then be impersonated in jokes in a variety of ways, for instance, by softening the sound *č* or by using characteristically Bosnian forms of address like *bolan* (E. chap, mate, lit. ill male, poor chap) and *bona* (E. love, darling, lit. ill female, poor girl) in jokes about Bosnians. Third, the tellers and the targets are often of different denominations. Typically, in the West the canny will

be secular or Protestant, like devout Calvinist Scots, as well as Jews, while the stupid will be Roman Catholic. This applies to the relation between the English and the Irish, mostly Protestant Americans and Poles (and Italians), and the Czech (pronouncedly non-religious) and the Slovak (largely Roman Catholic). In India and Pakistan, butts of both Hindus' and Muslims' jokes are Sikhs (in jokes usually referred to as Sardarjis), which are an ideal target of jokes about stupidity for several reasons – they live in Punjab, on the edge, periphery, frontier of both India and Pakistan, their religion is, in a way, half-Hinduism and half-Islam, they have a distinct military tradition and are visually quite remarkable, with long beards, turbans and girded-on swords. In that sense also Bosnians, i.e. Bosnian Muslims differ from both Roman Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. Fourth, groups that are the butt of jokes about stupidity often occupy an inferior position related to the lack of education, skills and entrepreneurial innovativeness. They are or until recently were a rural, country population. But they are no keen-witted farmers who know their way around the market or GPS-navigated tractors, they are unlearned, simple-minded peasants, yokels (it is worth noting that these terms are marked in many languages, cf. Cr. *seljak*, *seljačina*), possibly outsiders coming to the metropoli who are baffled by modern society. Manual, physical and blue-collar jobs (in Croatian that would be *plava kuta* 'blue working clothes') are a frequent motif of jokes, as in our example (1), and it is worth recalling that in some varieties of the Croatian language *bosanac* can, in eponymous generalization, mean precisely a 'construction or manual worker' (e.g. *I'll have three Bosnians lay concrete on my terrace*). Fifth, in some cases the targets of jokes about stupidity are not inferior groups, but the authorities or some part of the repressive apparatus – for example, policemen in Croatia, carabinieri in Italy, or politicians in former Communist countries of the European East in general. But even then the jokes in fact target mostly the rural population that acquired their privileges in cities through connections or party monopoly instead of market competition.

IV.3 Davies (1990; 1998) perceives the *competition vs. monopoly* as key in many jokes about stupidity that are not ethnic, but have to do with social status and profession. This is precisely how he interprets the multitude of jokes about aristocrats in various Western cultures. Aristocrats inherit their privileges, acquire them by birth, that is, monopolistically, and not through market competition. Naturally, the qualities enumerated above are added to this: nobility usually lives in the country, in the provinces, it is

backward, unprogressive, and the actual or supposed incestuous relations hardly improve the general impression. Hence jokes about English aristocrats, hence the Central European, Austrian culture of jokes about dim-witted Graf Bobby and Baron Mucki or Baron Ruddy, their Hungarian equivalents being Arisztid and Tasziló, subsequently »imported« in Croatia as petits bourgeois Bobi and Rudi, or contemporary Polish jokes about *hrabias* (counts, cf. Davies 2009: 12; 2011: 34). Competition and monopoly are also the basis of Davies's interpretation of the abundance of political jokes about the apparatchiks and bureaucrats in countries of the former Eastern bloc. Thus, the essence here is not just stupidity, but the political oligarchy which, in spite of obvious incompetence, holds power with no elections and through a deficit of legitimacy. Of course, the complete picture is usually more nuanced, which is well demonstrated, e.g., by Babić's (1995) collection of Yugoslav political jokes, in which the incompetence of politicians, the interethnic relations, and even the relation between poor education and fine education are intertwined. For instance, in such jokes university professor and education system reformer Stipe Šušar is not portrayed as a fool, but as a harm-doer, as opposed to politicians Džemal Bijedić (at one time, the prime minister of Yugoslavia) and Mika Špiljak (at one time, the president of the Presidency of Yugoslavia), whose poor education, rudeness and simple-mindedness were a frequent motif.

Davies (2009) raised the *competition vs. monopoly* opposition to the meta-status level, believing it to be very useful for description of all jokes about stupidity, including, for instance, jokes about blondes – with the notion of stupidity and oversexualization – the roots of which he also detects in the world of work and competition. As a rule, one who makes headway on the basis of good looks – for which there can, naturally, be no credit, which are simply inherited, received as part of genetic legacy – is portrayed as stupid in the jokes.

Finally, Davies (2011) gives up the assumption that all oppositions can be reduced to a single one and advocates their joint application, believing that it increases their explanatory power. Then he finally adds the last opposition – *mind vs. matter (mind-over-matter)* or *mind vs. flesh* (Cr. equivalent could be the proverbial *um caruje [snaga klade valja]* 'mind rules [force rolls logs]'). Accordingly, the person who relies on the mind in life and business, or is simply perceived as such, will either be a target of jokes about canniness or indeed a teller of jokes about stupidity. The one who, in life, relies on the body, on physical strength, who engages in physical pursuits – e.g., also, a

student of mechanical engineering as opposed to a student of literature or philosophy, or else a professional athlete or a sports aficionado as opposed to a classical-music enthusiast (as in our example [2]) – will be a target of jokes about stupidity.

V. Every centre has its provinces, while all provinces in turn have their own provinces, and both centre and provinces have always treated their respective provinces in the same way. Inhabitants of the provinces are always neither entirely ours nor entirely strange, the remotest one of us or the closest stranger, a world apart, but still familiar enough that we can make fun of them, transfer undesirable traits onto them, the ones we do not want to admit to ourselves. It was so back in Ancient Egypt with Nubians and in Ancient Greece with Abderites and Beotians (see Davies 1990; 1998; it may be noted that learned words such as *Abderite* and *Beotian* for simpletons and rude, unlettered dullards have been retained in contemporary languages, including Croatian, cf. Cr. *abderit*, *beoćanin* – Klaić 1987: s. v.), and it is so today. The target of jokes about stupidity is not a complete stranger, but a man from our geographical, cultural, educational and financial margin, who does not speak a foreign language we do not understand, but a language close enough to ours that we may consider it an improper, distorted version of our own, a man who, in addition, often professes a different religion. He is our distorted reflection in the mirror, precisely our notion of that reflection.

Let us recall that, unlike the targets of jokes about the canny, which are indeed incredibly international – unfailingly Jews and Scots, even in environments that have no contact with them, as in the instance of Croats and Scots, since in Croatia too there are jokes about stingy Scots – the targets of jokes about stupidity are local, individual. Thus Croats can seek them in their immediate neighbourhood. If we observe the time since the constitution of contemporary nations, say, the second half of the 19th century, this is what we have. – Austrians and Italians could hardly have been candidates for targets of Croatian jokes about stupidity, first and foremost because they were the ones who perceived Croats as provincials and outsiders, and not vice versa. Besides, however extensive the mastery of the languages might have been historically, they are still sufficiently different. – The same applies to Hungarians with regard to geography and numerosity; also, the language barrier was surely too high. – Stereotypes on Slovenians, Serbs and Montenegrins did not lean towards stupidity. In the former Yugoslavia, Slovenians could have been a candidate for canniness (apparently this came to naught),

Serbs were the subject of political jokes about the Yugoslavian repressive apparatus, and the Montenegrins were traditionally targets of jokes about laziness, like the *lini Dalmatinci* ‘lazy Dalmatians, i.e. inhabitants of the Croatian province of Dalmatia’ (Cr. *lijen*, dialectally *lin* ‘lazy’) (the *laziness* script is a separate subject broached in passing in Davies 1982 – we are envious of laziness because the lazy man has no desire to succeed in the world of labour, but this causes him no suffering and his entire life is turned into leisure). – The contact with Macedonians was too feeble. – With Albanians, language was the obstacle. Kosovo Albanians (Kosovo being part of Yugoslavia) were indeed the butt of jokes and quips, but then as incompletely assimilated non-natives with peculiar language characteristics such as the *l* → *Ĵ* alternation (also discussed in Babić [1995]), while Albanians from Albania were the butt of jokes about backwardness and underdevelopment. And so, none remained but Bosnians – i.e. Bosniaks, Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina, named Bosnians in jokes – as a group that perfectly meets all prerequisites for becoming the target of Croatian (as well as Serbian) jokes about stupidity – neither entirely ours nor entirely strange, speaking a language that is almost the same, and yet slightly different, being of a different denomination, inhabiting the edges of Croatian national and ethnic territory, the provinces, coming to Croatian cities as manual workers, mostly being part of rural population. There were no better candidates.

In conclusion, the Bosnians as a whole and especially Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) in Croatian jokes are part of the universal state of affairs. And the latter – again, universal – tells us more about the joke-tellers, their fears and morality, than about the targets. Nothing in jokes is devoid of humanness. Everyone is someone’s target as some point.

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SAŽETAK

HRVATSKI VICEVI O BOSANCIMA

Vicevi o gluposti druga su najčešća, najproširenija i najdugovječnija vrsta viceva, odmah poslije seksualnih. Njima se skupina kazivača omeđuje i legitimira kao ona koja nije glupa, glupost se ili koja druga nepoželjna osobina prišiva drugoj skupini. Mete viceva o gluposti univerzalno pokazuju jasno utvrđive zemljopisne, društvene, kulturne, vjerske i jezične odlike. One su kazivaču najbliži tuđinac ili najudaljeniji našinac. H. Bergson i S. Freud naslutili su to prije 100 godina, a razradio je u svojim brojnim radovima Ch. Davies. U radu se pokazuje da Bosanci, odnosno upravo Bošnjaci, muslimani, ispunjavaju sve te odlike i jednostavno su idealan kandidat za hrvatske viceve o gluposti. Kao i svi vicevi o gluposti tako i hrvatski više govore o kazivaču negoli o meti.

Ključne riječi: vic, dosjetka, kazivač, meta, predmet sprdnje, glupost, Hrvati, Bosanci, Bošnjaci, muslimani